

Dear Mr Hallahan,

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission on the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws - Superannuation) Bill 2008. I fully support the proposed law's objective of removing discrimination against same-sex couples and their children in relation to Commonwealth superannuation and related benefits.

This legislation is a critical first step toward protecting the equality of same-sex couples alongside heterosexual couples. I urge you to implement the remaining recommendations (as attached) contained in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Same Sex: Same Entitlements report of June 2007.

I support the Bill's inclusion of married, heterosexual and same-sex de facto couples under the straightforward and practical category of "couple relationship". Same-sex de facto couples should be treated in the same way as heterosexual de facto couples.

I reject suggestions that same-sex couples should be recognised as "interdependents", along with other caring non-couple relationships. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission says that past interdependency definitions in private superannuation have failed to provide same-sex couples with real equality. Interdependency definitions do not give the clear and certain protection that de facto definitions provide.

The legal recognition of all families and equal access to entitlements is in the best interests of children and, by extension, of our society as a whole.

I urge the Committee to commend the Bill to Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Leslie